

DRAFT

Blue Ribbon Water Task Force

Meeting Notes
December 18, 2003
Santa FE, NM

December 18, 2003 attendees: Brian Burnett, Bill Hume, Sarah Kotchian, Eileen Grevey Hillson, Steve Hernandez, Elmer Salazar, Bob Vocke, Conci Bokum, Barbara Johnson, Paul Paryski, John D'Antonio, Estevan Lopez, Jack Westman, Howard Hutchinson, and Kyle Harwood attended the BRWTF meeting. Fred Nathan and Kristina Fisher attended as guests to discuss the Need for a Strategic River Reserve in New Mexico.

The next meeting of the BRWTF will be January 28-29, 2004 in Santa Fe.

BRWTF members attended the ISC/OSE SWP briefing for the ISC on December 17, 2003.

Brian Burnett distributed the draft BRWTF Report for the Governor to Task Force members for review. Comments are due to Brian by January 5, 2004.

John and Estevan agreed to provide their priorities for the BRWTF at the January 28-29, 2004 meeting. The BRWTF will use these priorities to assist in setting its agenda for the coming year. The BRWTF will begin to set its agenda during the January meeting. Education and travel will be considered, as the agenda is set.

Fred Nathan discussed the Need for a Strategic River Reserve in New Mexico (document provided) with the Task Force and the following points were made:

- The SRR would create a buffer to protect New Mexicans against legal attacks from neighboring states, the federal courts, and violent fluctuations in water availability;
- The SRR would consist of a pool of publicly held water rights on every river system;
- These water rights would be selected by the Water Trust Board;
- The public water rights would be purchased using a designated fund e.g., a 10% share of the state's annual severance tax bonding capacity or by a fee on water transfers;
- The ISC would be responsible for monitoring these public water rights;
- Water rights could also be leased or donated; and
- Draft legislation is being developed and will be provided to the BRWTF for review/comment.

BRWTF members made the following observations:

- Setting aside an additional 10% share for funding will be difficult;
- State centralization of the SRR is an issue;
- NM just needs to enforce priority calls – the public should not be paying for a SRR fix;
- Storage considerations are important;
- Water rights transactions must be consistent with state law;
- There is a significant difference in using public funds for funding projects for water conveyance and purchase of water rights under centralized state authority;
- The SRR could provide a “soft landing” for the state; and
- The SRR could help solve ESA issues.

The BRWTF meeting adjourned early to attend an OSE/ISC water briefing for the NM Legislature.